

CLASSIFICATION SECRET
CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
INFORMATION REPORT

REPORT

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CD NO

COUNTRY Czechoslovakia

DATE DISTR 7 March 1955

SUBJECT Jan Sverma Plant, Brno Armament Works, Brno

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DATE OF
INFOSUPPLEMENT TO
REPORT NO.

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THIS IS UNEVALUATED INFORMATION

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1. New light machine gun.

At the beginning of 1954 the Brno Armament Works (Zbrojovka Brno), Jan Sverma Plant in Brno-Zidenice, Lazaretni Street, was engaged in the construction of several prototypes of a new light machine gun which resembles a scaled-down version of the well known BREN (BRno-ENfield) gun. The new LMG weighs approximately 6 kg, and its overall length (including the butt) is some 85 to 90 centimeters, i.e. shorter than the Mauser rifle. The barrel of the LMG is easily interchangeable, and although it is air-cooled, has no cooling ribs; the whole outside surface of the barrel is smooth. The length of the barrel is approximately 45 cm. One of the main innovations is that the LMG can fire both magazines and belts. The rate of fire is adjustable from 800 to 1,500 rounds per minute. The sights, fixed on the left-hand side, can be set from 100 to 1,200 meters. Some 10 cm. from the muzzle is a collapsible and extendible telescopic bipod mount which supports the LMG in firing position on the ground. The LMG operates automatically on the principle of gas pressure. Empty cartridges are ejected downwards. For manual tensioning of the firing mechanism a handle is provided on the bolt. Before operating the bolt (forward and backward pull on the handle) a button on the left-hand side has to be pressed, thus freeing the bolt-locking spring. The rate-of-firing regulator is on the right-hand side of the LMG. The precise calibre of the new LMG is not known but is estimated at between 7 and 9 millimeters (most probably 7.62 mm). The shape of the ammunition resembles that used in the German submachine guns. Simultaneously with the prototype of the LMG a new mechanism for the loading of firing belts for this weapon was constructed. This is a funnel-shaped container which takes five to seven rounds of ammunition which then are pressed in one go into the belt. The new LMG was already seen in use by troops who took part in the autumn maneuvers at Libava (P50/007)

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2. Gun-carriage for Tarasnice .

The Brno Armament Works currently produce gun carriages for the tarasnice anti-tank weapon. The gun carriage is mounted on spiked wooden wheels measuring some 40 cm in diameter. The average daily output is about 20 of these undercarriages. The tarasnice itself is a steel tube some 150 cm long, calibre approximately 10 cm. The sights are adjustable to 200 meters. The frame of the tarasnice gun carriage is welded together from two "T" profiles (sic). During the autumn maneuvers at Libava [] a projectile of the tarasnice pierce and burn through an armored plate 20 centimeters (sic) thick. [] the tarasnice projectile is capable of piercing and burning through a concrete block 150 centimeters (sic) thick. The tarasnice projectiles are said to be a combination of the projectiles of the US bazooka and the German Panzerchreck. The charge is said to be similar to that used in projectiles of the Russian rocket-launchers (probably "triolit").

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3. Coding machine for the Army.

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At present the Brno Armament Works are also working on the prototype of a coding machine for the Army. This machine, constructional and other data [] should be ready for testing by Christmas 1954. An earlier attempt to construct such a machine by the end of 1953 failed due to faulty blueprints, and the new prototype had to be started from completely new designs.

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4. Non-military production.

Among non-military items produced at the Brno Armament Works [] Diesel engines and caterpillar tractors of the Zetor 35 type. The Diesel engines have been ordered by the USSR. They are eight-cylinder 500-HP motors mounted on a welded sledge-type stand which houses the cooling system. The length of the complete motor is about seven meters, width 1.4 m and height two meters. The output norm is two units per day and is usually met providing there is a timely supply of component parts and material. The motors are run-in on brake in the assembly shop for about 40 hours. Material is supplied by the Vitkovice Klement Gottwald Iron Works, and component parts by the Vankovka factory in Prno which is a subsidiary of the Brno Armament Works. The finished engines are tested by a Russian civilian inspector (nu) and then loaded on RR freight cars, one unit per car. Whenever the delivery term is not met for reasons other than delay in the supply of Russian material, the factory has to pay a penalty to the USSR. During the tests of the engines, the Russian inspector usually requires the dismantling of some parts of the motor and measures the temperature of the bearings. Whenever he discovers a Soviet-made bearing in the engine he orders it replaced [] This is happening in spite of deliveries of Soviet bearings to CSR factories. The USSR also exports bearing metal to the CSR but its quality is inferior and the bearings made of it overheat easily. It is not uncommon that engines using these bearings bind even during test runs. Workers often sabotage the testing of the Diesel engines by cooling the bearings with wet rags to keep their temperature within the prescribed limits.

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The caterpillar tractor Zetor 35 is a new line and the factory only just started its serial production []

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5. Production difficulties.

The whole production of the Brno Armament Works suffers from supply difficulties. There is especially a great shortage of high-speed cutting steel (rychlomezna ocel) and of grinding wheels, since the home production of the latter is unable to meet the needs of the engineering industry. Currently tests are being made in the Brno Armament Works with various hardening materials, the chief ingredient of which is cement, for the production of machine tools. So, for instance, fraise heads are made of iron and then the cutting surface is cemented to the dimension of 5/10.²

6. Labor policy.

At present the Brno Armament Works, Jan Sverma Plant, employs about 6,000 workers. Last spring a recruitment campaign of volunteers for the mining industry was conducted among the Works' Communist Party and Trade Union officials. The campaign was a complete failure; all the officials discovered some ailment which prevented them from volunteering for the mines. Some time later these same functionaries launched a recruitment drive for the mines among the workers. Every worker up to the age of 40 was called to the office and if he refused to "volunteer", he had to write a detailed protocol stating the reasons of refusal. This drive was concluded in the first week of October and no reprisals against those who refused had been noted as of mid-October.

Concurrently with the sending of skilled workers to the mines, new labor was being recruited by the subject plant. Applicants had to pledge their willingness to work in three shifts (youngsters under 18 in two shifts). This new labor is to replace in part those workers who had been sent to the mines or to some other long-term "brigade work" and in part the peasants who had been taken on in the 1952 "industry first" campaign and sent back to till their land last year when the "new course" was introduced by the régime. The present policy is not to force the peasants out of their factory jobs any more but to let them go if they pledge themselves to farm land in the border regions.

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7. Working morale.

The morale of the workers is very low. [redacted] a compulsory meeting of all the employees at which the speakers attempted to popularize the socialist competition movement, output pledges, and higher norms. As the meeting was held after working hours most of the workers wanted to go home. Some of them started drifting out only to discover that the Works' gate was closed. All of a sudden the workers left the meeting en masse and forced the gate. The guards were unable to stop the angry crowd but managed to take photographs of the spearhead of the fugitives. Several dozen workers were arrested on the following days.

8. TU membership fees.

The automatic deduction of 1% from the wages for Trade Union membership fees was abolished at the beginning of 1954. Since then it was left to the discretion of members to pay their dues in voluntary contributions. The result was such a sharp decline in Trade Union income that the TU Council (URO) had to issue a warning threatening to cancel all TU privileges should the situation not improve. Although there was no response to this warning, no steps had been taken so far against low-paying members and no privileges (e.g. recreational facilities, financial support during long illness) had been withdrawn.


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9. Security measures.

The whole area of the Brno Armament Works, Jan Sverma Plant, is enclosed by a 2.20-meters-high wall of concrete, brick, and wood, topped by a one meter high barbed-wire fence. Inside is another 1.5-meter-high barbed-wire fence which runs parallel with the wall. The 1-to-1.5-meter-wide space between the wall and the fence is raked. The whole area is surveyed from watchtowers manned by members of the Interior Guard (VS). Guards in the watchtowers are changed every two hours. They carry rifles.  all other important industrial plants in Brno are also guarded by the VS.

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All the employees of the Brno Armament Works must carry special works' Identity Cards which, however, entitle them only to enter their own shop or department, as specified on the IC by number. While leaving the works, workers are occasionally checked to determine whether they do not smuggle out some material or product. Employees are allowed to take brief cases or parcels into the factory only if these contain food. Everything else has to be deposited with the gatekeeper.

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1.  Comment. Czech version of the bazooka, believed to be very effective.
2.  Comment. Local factory specification not corresponding to international standard norms.

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SECRET [REDACTED]

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